

STATUS OF ALL CLAIMS

1. (original): Apparatus for enhancing solubility of a solute in a solvent, the apparatus comprising a solvent and/or solute inlet having a fluidising unit which creates a vortex in the solvent and/or solute.
2. (original): Apparatus as claimed in claim 1, in which a fluid interfacial or boundary layer exists within the vortex where enhanced mass transfer, or dissolution of solute into the solvent takes place.
3. (original): Apparatus as claimed in claim 1, in which the solute is leached from a carrier ore.
4. (original): Apparatus as claimed in claim 3, in which means are provided to achieve at least two stages of leaching, targeted at different solutes to be dissolved in different solvents.
5. (original): Apparatus as claimed in claim 1, in which the solute is salt and the solvent is water.
6. (original): Apparatus as claimed in claim 1, in which the solute is an edible or potable solute for use in a solution for the food and brewing industry.
7. (original): Apparatus as claimed in claim 1, for use in accelerated malting of materials for the brewing industry.
8. (currently amended): Apparatus as claimed in claim 1, for accelerated dissolving of materials selected from the group consisting of sugars, glucoses ~~or other materials such as~~ and cola nuts for use in the soft drinks industry.

9. (currently amended): Apparatus as claimed in claim 1, for pressurised rapid wetting of seeds prior to sowing, to ~~acceleration~~ accelerate germination and growth.

10. (original): Apparatus as claimed in claim 1, for pressurised treatment of seeds with fungicides, nutrients, fertilizers and/or pesticides prior to sowing.

11. (currently amended): Apparatus as claimed in ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1, in which the fluidising unit operates on a continuous flow of solvent and/or solute.

12. (currently amended): Apparatus ~~substantially as described herein, with reference to and as shown in the accompanying drawings~~ as claimed in claim 1 further comprising a flow chamber having a fluid inlet and a fluid outlet and at least one tangential slot.

13. (new): Apparatus for enhancing solubility of a solute in a solvent, the apparatus comprising a solvent and/or solute inlet having a fluidising unit which creates a vortex in the solvent and/or solute, a flow chamber having a fluid inlet and a fluid outlet and at least one tangential slot, where the fluid outlet is defined at least partially by a cap.

14. (new): A method for enhancing solubility of a solute in a solvent, the method comprising:

providing an apparatus having a solvent and/or solute inlet and a fluidising unit; and
creating a vortex in the solvent and/or solute.

15. (new): The method of claim 14, further providing a fluid interfacial or boundary layer within the vortex where enhanced mass transfer, or dissolution of solute into the solvent takes place.

16. (new): The method of claim 14, further comprising leaching the solute from a carrier ore.

17. (new): The method of claim 14, in which the solute is salt and the solvent is water.

18. (original): The method of claim 14, in which the solute is an edible or potable solute for use in a solution for the food and brewing industry.

19. (new): The method of claim 14, further comprising pressurised rapid wetting of seeds prior to sowing, to acceleration germination and growth.

20. (new): The method of claim 14, in which the fluidising unit operates on a continuous flow of solvent and/or solute.